

Dear John Green,

“That’s the thing about pain. It demands to be felt.” It’s so often the first moment of a sequence that holds the most significance. When my eyes first skimmed over those words, the ball had begun to roll. Words hold an enormous amount of power. Words make an impact; they uncover secrets that have been hidden in plain sight, they build worlds of wonder and tear down walls which have stood for an eternity. They’re suckers for love, but they can kill with the turn of a page. Words have built nations and torn down empires. But your words have done even more. They found the lost soul of a young girl, and they rescued her. Augustus and Hazel saved me.

Isn’t it odd how tragic memories seem to linger in our minds more often the euphoric ones do? It all happened over a year ago, but I still remember the details. In 2012 my close friend K was diagnosed with Restrictive Cardiomyopathy. That’s basically a really complicated term for a simple, yet rare, health condition where the heart cannot stretch properly. At the tender age of 13 she was placed on the waiting list for a heart transplant, but the longer she waited the worse her outlook became. Aside from her immediate family, I was the first person to find out about her condition. I’m a self-proclaimed “know it all” so when I found out I did a lot of research. It was very frightening to see the cold hard statistics of her illness. I felt like it was my job to protect her, and the whole situation was very confusing to me. We cried together a lot, because it was too early to try and sort out our feelings through words. Although it was all happening to K, I was right there with her. So even if I didn’t suffer through the physical pain, I shared a substantial amount of her mental torment.

Nine days after we learned of her terminal condition, another close friend of mine recommended The Fault in Our Stars to me. I was skeptical at first, and honestly only opened the cover out of sheer boredom. I immediately connected with the book. Every word I read, and every little detail I uncovered about Hazel Grace, Augustus, Isaac and every other character in the book, helped me understand. I realized that K wasn’t alone. And I realized that I wasn’t alone either. It was such an important thing for me to be able to feel what those characters felt. It gave me the perspective of a person in K’s shoes, and multiple perspectives of those surrounding her. I had been so lost and confused, but the deeper I dove into The Fault in Our Stars the more I understood.

I made one huge mistake when reading your book. I chose to read it in public. As the story came to an end, I broke down. I saw Gus’s fate as a highly likely event in K’s near future. I couldn’t even fathom losing her. Things had been getting worse for K and with her constant hospital visits and road trips to doctors all over the tri state area it wasn’t unreasonable to think of the inevitable. I’ve never been so emotionally torn by words. I screamed and yelled and kicked the walls. I punched anything I could get my hands on, and cried until I had no tears left. I was so angry at the world. I was angry at the unfairness of K’s struggle. She didn’t deserve the pain. She didn’t deserve the need for the surgeries, the medicines, and the counseling. In the literal heart of Jesus, those who were sick had cycled by death and sickness. They prayed for help, they prayed for release, they prayed for the aid of their savior. And yet they cycled, and cycled, and cycled. Their prayers were seldom heart. The Fault in Our Stars made me question everything I had been told. I discovered more about myself through the words you, of a man whom I had never met, never even heard of, than from the legacies of wisdoms and truths which I had inherited.

K is a fighter. She is more than a simple statistic on a sheet of paper. And The Fault in Our Stars is more than a collection of words. It’s a beautiful, powerful symphony that has played on repeat in my

mind from the moment I first heard its tune. It's hard telling where my mental state would be right now if not for your words. Innumerable assortments of things have influenced my life and have contributed to the person that I am today. The Fault in Our Stars is high upon that list of things, especially when it comes to K.

Gratefully and sincerely yours,
Loralee Potter